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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 12 NEW DELHI 004928

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SMIG, ASEC, IN, PK

SUBJECT: J&K CROSS-SECTION AGREES, EVERYTHING SLIPPING
"BACK TO SQUARE ONE"

REF: A. NEW DELHI 4667

[1](#)B. NEW DELHI 4369

[1](#)C. NEW DELHI 3835

[1](#)D. NEW DELHI 3130

[1](#)E. NEW DELHI 2789

Classified By: Charge Geoff Pyatt for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: July 5-8 meetings in Srinagar and Jammu with a cross-section of journalists, police officials, NGO activists, businesspeople, and politicians from most major J&K parties demonstrated to Poloff and PolFSN that our J&K interlocutors are united as never before in their assessment that on nearly all issues, the situation in the state has slipped "back to square one" (a phrase that several interlocutors used verbatim). Just over two months after successful state assembly by-elections and a resounding rise in tourism (Ref E) buoyed the state's mood, almost every indicator -- Indo-Pak relations, Center-State relations, terrorism, human rights abuses by security services, and the Srinagar economy -- have fallen prey to the sine curve of Kashmiri affairs. The targets of our contacts' dissatisfaction included terrorists and security services, J&K and Delhi politicians, bureaucrats in Delhi and Islamabad, and the separatists. End Summary.

Terror Deaths Down; Infiltration, Spectacular Attacks Up

[1](#)2. (C) Our police and journalist contacts agreed that overall terrorist attacks for the first half of 2006 are lower than for the corresponding period in 2005, and terrorist fatalities up to the first week of July were down by 25%. However, they also pointed out that "spectacular" attacks, including the mutilations in the Jammu region and

the series of grenade attacks in Srinagar (Refs B and C), are more prevalent, and police estimate that the year-to-date infiltration level has tripled over the same period in 2005, a figure Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad has used in press conferences. When queried on what was keeping all those new terrorists occupied absent a corresponding spike in attacks, police contacts suggested their focus was on recruitment and training, and on pre-positioning for possible future attacks. Our police and media contacts also noted that terrorists are focusing on cities over villages possibly to garner greater media exposure.

Rising Grenade Attacks and Terrorist Outsourcing

13. (C) Grenade attacks on civilian targets in J&K, although on the rise, do not represent a new tactic in itself. The magnitude of the problem is evident in the numbers Gopal Sharma shared with us -- over 100 grenade attacks in 2006 to date, and over 1,000 grenades seized from caches by security forces. What is new this season is the obvious targeting of tourist infrastructure and clearly-defined non-Kashmiri targets (Ref B), including the July 11 multiple attacks on tour buses, out-of-state cars, and the Tourism Center in Srinagar. This tactic is consistent with terrorists focusing on media coverage, because Kashmiris killing other Kashmiris warrants only local press attention, whereas jihadis killing out-of-state visitors will guarantee coverage in the tourists' home states, as well as the national media. Other perceived benefits to this targeting theme include:

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-- Those most economically hit include middle class and corporate hoteliers, restaurateurs, shop-keepers, and tour operators, whom some terrorists undoubtedly view as quislings who have "sold out" to the Indian establishment. Employees of these businesses are less likely to suffer, as they probably receive their salary regardless of the level of business (or customer service).

-- Targeting non-Kashmiris raises the likelihood of hitting non-Muslims (Kashmiri Muslims are by far the most numerous among victims of jihadi violence, which engenders much criticism of the jihadis by Kashmiri civilians).

-- It is not difficult to target non-Kashmiris, based on the physical differences among natives of different parts of India (skin tone, mode of dress, etc.). The husband of one woman who was injured in the July 11 attack -- whose relatives live in Srinagar -- said that their prolonged stay in the US resulted in their looking "different" from other Indians: in his opinion, his wife was targeted because her clothing and hairstyle marked her as not being a local.

-- Indian vehicle license plates sport digraph codes representing the state of registration, which makes targeting out-of-state vehicles almost as easy in India as it is in the US.

14. (C) Also new is a trend in outsourcing terror attacks to disaffected youth. Journalists and police officials told us that the terrorists behind the Srinagar grenade attacks -- whom almost all claimed were Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT), although Yousuf Tarigami said he heard reliably that Hizbul Mujahadeen were the culprits -- did not conduct the attacks themselves, but instead hired local youths to throw the grenades for as little as 50-100 rupees (approximately \$1.00 - \$2.25). In some cases the recruited youth were accused by terrorist leaders of being police informants; they were instructed that only by carrying out these attacks could they earn redemption. The police said such attacks required minimal training, so were easily executed by non-experts, and the nearly anonymous nature of throwing a grenade allowed the assailants to swiftly blend into the crowd afterwards. That youths, who are not hardened terrorists, can be so easily

recruited for lethal operations is an additional disturbing development. Arun Joshi reported that in some cases, terrorist handlers (whom he identified as being from al-Badr) would pull out the grenade's pin before handing it to the hired youth, with a warning that if he did not hit his target he would be hunted down.

¶5. (SBU) The July 11 attack on multiple non-Kashmiri targets, including tour buses, cars sporting out-of-state plates, and the Tourism Center, is the most sophisticated example of this two-month-long trend. Although grenades remain the weapon du jour, five blasts were carried out within a 2 km radius over the course of approximately three hours, killing eight people and injuring over 40. The attacks injured some Kashmiris, but Bengalis, Biharis, and Uttar Pradesh residents were among the reported victims. July 12 saw another grenade attack against a government tourist bus at the isolated Gulmarg mountain vacation spot, injuring 13, including visitors from Calcutta and Madhya Pradesh: a hotel manager there told reporters "if militants can reach Gulmarg, then no place in Kashmir is safe."

¶6. (C) Firdous Syed described pan-Islamic groups like LeT
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and Jaish-e-Mohammad as bereft of politics, in contrast to Kashmiri groups like Hizbul Mujahideen: "They (the jihadis) have only fanaticism." Maulvi Iftikhar Ansari expressed his frustration by arguing that it was "less important to find out who are doing these attacks, the police need to find them and stop them."

Political Attacks Continue -----

¶7. (SBU) Meanwhile, more "traditional" attacks on civilians and politicians continue. For example, a July 8 grenade attack on a group of National Conference party members returning from a shrine in Kulgam, South Kashmir, killed former NC MLA Ghulam Nabi Dar and four party workers and injured over 50, including sitting Member of Legislative Council (upper house of J&K Assembly) and former Tourism Minister Sakina Ittoo. Ittoo had previously escaped eight other attacks, and her father, former Speaker of the J&K Assembly Wali Mohammad Ittoo, was killed by terrorists in ¶1995. Although SM Sahai issued a statement claiming that Hizbul Mujahideen carried out the attack, the NC publicly blamed the PDP as being the impetus for it.

First J&K POTA Conviction -----

¶8. (U) The Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) was repealed in 2004, but Mohammad Saleem, arrested in 2002 for possessing a wireless communications set, binoculars, and one live AK-47 cartridge, this week became the first person in memory to be convicted under that law in J&K. His three convictions include attempted murder of a security officer. The "Indian Express" reported that Saleem was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment and fined 6,000 rupees (approximately \$135).

Human Rights Abuses Rising -----

¶9. (C) Journalists and human rights NGOs told us that human rights abuses by security forces, especially the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), are also on the rise. Firdous Syed, who stays in contact with some of his former Muslim Janbaaz Force fighters, said that his former subordinates must still check in with the local Army commanders every Sunday, a decade after they turned themselves in to the police. What he called "repeated humiliations" -- Army officers keeping the ex-militants waiting for hours, forcing them to perform calisthenics in front of bemused soldiers and civilians -- is leading some to question the wisdom of their having turned away from terrorism. When they ask how long

they must endure this parole status, Syed said the response is always the same: "It will go on forever." Syed himself asked rhetorically, "Why did I drop the gun?"

¶10. (C) Our police contacts laid much of the blame on last year's handover of counterterrorism operations from the Border Security Forces (BSF) to the CRPF. They argued that CRPF needed to build much of its own infrastructure, including an intelligence network that (because of the personal nature of the field, especially in J&K) largely did not transfer from the BSF to the CRPF. J&K Police ADG (CID) Kuldip Khoda admitted that "the CRPF is new here, they do need to improve their operations." Even after training, however, many CRPF troops take weeks if not months to adjust to the tempo in J&K, resulting in what Izhar Wani called

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incidents of "panic firing." Parvez Imroze allowed that high-stress regions like Srinagar would naturally be prone to greater police excesses, though he stopped far short of condoning them.

¶11. (C) However, these explanations do not suffice in instances such as the boy who was recently shot and killed over stealing 10 rupees (20 cents) worth of bread, according to Mustafa Kamal. In his opinion, there are too many security forces in the state, and their overwhelming presence reinforces their carte blanche attitude, especially in their dealings with civilians. His solution is the selective withdrawing of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (See Ref A) from areas that have not been affected by terrorism, to curb at least the most egregious abuses. (BIO NOTE: A physician, Kamal says he spends six days a week on constituency matters and continues to operate a clinic one day each week. End Bio Note.)

¶12. (C) Izhar Wani recounted two personal stories. His seven-year-old daughter is afraid to go near anyone wearing a uniform, he claimed, after having viewed police abusing civilians. As to his 76-year-old father, Wani described how in the past BSF troops would come out of their bunkers to administer check-points, including rolling small boulders out of the way for cars crossing pickets and then rolling them back into place. The CRPF, in contrast, do not come out of the old BSF bunkers they now occupy, and instead insist that Wani's father reposition the boulders himself. Wani reported that civilians receiving this kind of treatment begin to view the security forces as occupation troops.

Some Progress on Human Rights Abuses Acknowledged

¶13. (C) The journalists, NGO leaders, and politicians we talked to largely supported the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI, India's FBI equivalent) investigation into the "Pathribal encounter" and the levying of charges against five Indian Army officers for having executed civilians and they claimed were terrorists killed in action (Ref A). Although the NGO contacts bemoaned that the charges came six years after the incident -- despite government officials having publicly recognized that the victims were innocent civilians within months of the incident itself -- they nevertheless credited the CBI with trying to impose justice in what they view as a fundamentally unjust system. Arun Joshi, however, derided the calling in of the CBI as evidence that "Delhi doesn't trust Kashmiris to police themselves."

¶14. (C) Izhar Wani expressed high hopes that a recently constituted Cabinet subcommittee on human rights would give teeth to the J&K Human Rights Commission. The state HRC is only empowered to issue recommendations, whereas the new committee is to have enforcement powers, he explained. Wani cautioned that the subcommittee may take time to find its way; it also may easily run afoul of police or bureaucratic stonewalling.

Public Protests or Terrorist Incitement?

¶15. (C) Head of J&K Police Gopal Sharma stated that terrorist groups were behind the recent upsurge of public demonstrations that follow police excesses. For example,

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family members and villagers publicly mourned the May 30 deaths of 22 schoolchildren and staff who drowned in Wullar Lake in the capsizing of a Navy boat used by officers as a recreation vehicle for the children. Security forces used gunfire to disperse the demonstrators, killing two students whom security forces initially claimed were armed terrorists.

All our interlocutors, including the J&K Police, swiftly dismissed this claim. According to Sharma's assessment, the protests were not spontaneous, but were organized by terrorist groups themselves, to increase pressure on security forces with the goal of provoking excessive use of force. The journalists and NGOs we met, however, lauded the demonstrators for participating (in their way) in the political process.

Srinagar Businesses Feel Bite from Tourism Drop ...

¶16. (SBU) Minister of State for Home Affairs Sriprakash Jaiswal in May told Parliament that tourism in J&K was on a multi-year increasing trend -- 178,000 visitors in 2003, 395,000 in 2004, and 601,000 in 2005 -- and predicted a further increase for 2006. (NOTE: These figures do not appear to include religious pilgrims. End Note.) That said, upscale hoteliers and restaurateurs in Srinagar and shop-keepers who focus on the tourist trade all reported lower than expected turnover for the 2006 summer tourism season, and all blamed the uptick in terror. Following the July 11-12 series of grenade attacks, daily incoming tourists dropped by 30-50%, according to tourism department officials briefing journalists. Because Indian schools begin their first semester in July, the tourist season typically runs from April-July, so Poloff and PolFSN in July heard pessimistic projections of the end of the high season, in contrast to the optimistic predictions for the season during their April visit. Handicrafts dealers said they placed higher than usual orders, financed by loans, because they believed government estimates that 2006 would be a record-setting year for tourism. One shop-keeper wondered whether the terrorists then took those estimates as a challenge, as many in J&K believe they took Army Chief JJ Singh's initial post-quake pronouncement that the tragedy had destroyed much of the terrorists' infrastructure. The contrast between the high security tempo and the last-ditch attempts to salvage Srinagar tourism were evident in the contradictory sight on Dal Lake -- an armored personnel carrier partially obstructing a banner that reads "Welcome to Paradise on Earth."

¶17. (SBU) One popular rumor (which is nonetheless given some credence locally) was that tourism operators from neighboring (and peaceful) Himachal Pradesh, fearing that "their" tourists were diverting to J&K this summer, were behind the grenade attacks. This far-fetched theory nevertheless illustrates the compelling desire many Kashmiris have to find an outsider's hand behind their ills.

... Including Religious Pilgrims ...

¶18. (C) For the second year running, the Amarnath Yatra (pilgrimage) in Kashmir will enjoy two months of operation; prior to 2005, the yatra ran only from mid-June to mid-July each year. (NOTE: The Amarnath Yatra and its associated infrastructure has been attacked by terrorists in past years, but the 2006 yatra has so far been attack-free. End Note.)

Police estimates from past years put the annual participation level at 300,000 - 400,000, although some optimistic J&K officials in April predicted up to 500,000 yatris this summer. J&K Police DG Gopal Sharma and Kuldeep Khoda both reported attendance to date of around 161,000. Assuming their assessment that extending the pilgrimage dates will not boost numbers but instead will allow the same level of pilgrims more flexibility in selecting their dates, the operative question will be if those who had originally planned to attend during the latter half of the pilgrimage season decide to continue with their plans or to cancel their trips to Srinagar or Jammu, the base camps for the yatra. The only incident registered this year was an attack on a bus stop that brings pilgrims from Jammu to the yatra base camp, but is not close to the site itself.

¶19. (C) The top police officer who focuses solely on the Kashmir region, IG/Police SM Sahai -- who is subordinate to Sharma and Khoda -- observed that extending the pilgrimage season may not be an effective move, because although the yatra will continue until mid-August, most Indian children are back at school, greatly reducing the likelihood of family trips later in the summer. He also put the rosiest spin on the yatra numbers, claiming that almost 200,000 people had already passed through, with almost 400,000 total expected by August 11. (BIO NOTES: Sahai graduated from ATA-5044, Advanced Crisis Response, in 2005 in Baton Rouge, LA. His sister lives in New York. Sahai was recently promoted after his predecessor, K. Rajendra, was critically wounded in a terrorist attack on a political rally in Srinagar. He was clearly less forthcoming than Sharma or Khoda, possibly owing to his being in a new position and dealing with EmbOffs for the first time in an information-provider capacity. End Bio Notes.)

... and a Phony Phallus ...

¶20. (C) Arun Joshi was among several contacts who criticized the Amarnath Yatra Board -- the agency that handles the logistics for the pilgrimage -- and its head, J&K Governor SK Sinha, for having commissioned the construction of an artificial ice Shiva lingam (phallus), the focal point of the yatra, when the normally naturally-occurring one failed to form this year. Indian journalists quickly latched onto the story, eventually forcing Sinha to confess. Joshi listed this incident as yet another example of Delhi not trusting Kashmiris enough to tell the truth. (NOTE: Indian state governors are appointed by the federal government as the GOI's representatives to the states. End Note.)

... But Diversified Jammu Economy, Pilgrimage Chugging Along

¶21. (SBU) Before the start of the Kashmir militancy in the late 1980s, Jammu's economy depended largely on the year-round Vaishno Devi Yatra, one of the most important and most populous Hindu pilgrimages. Since the start of terrorism in J&K, however, many mainstream businesses relocated from Srinagar to Jammu. The yatra remains an important economic driver, especially for the hospitality industry, but diversifying employment away from sole reliance on the yatra has partially insulated Jammu from shocks created by waves of terrorism.

¶22. (C) Jammu police told us they expect up to 6.2 million

pilgrims this year (with between 20,000-40,000 new arrivals each day), who keep hotels, restaurants, and other tourism-related industries engaged. Vehicles (aside from helicopters) can only bring pilgrims to within 12 km of the shrine itself, which creates a market for alternate local

transportation, mostly ponies and palanquins. The yatra has been a terrorist target in past years, but terrorists have not attacked this pilgrimage this year.

PM's Roundtable Running Kashmiris in Circles ...

¶23. (C) Without casting aspersions on PM Singh himself, all our journalist, political, and NGO interlocutors criticized the PM's Roundtable initiative (Ref D). The most upbeat, Kashmiri Pandit advocate Ajay Chirangoo, echoed the sentiments of others who questioned the efficacy of bringing together large numbers of groups whose grievances are so disparate, and suggested a series of roundtables would be more appropriate.

¶24. (C) Journalists and NGO leaders lamented the breakdown of the PM's dialogue with the Hurriyat, but their barbs were also meant for the separatists for their lack of preparation and inability to offer tangible proposals as much as for what they called the GOI's "game-playing." Ved Bhasin lambasted the separatists for having "no ideas at all." However, the choicest words were reserved for the GOI -- our contacts reiterated their own distrust of the process, stating that the mainstream political parties have their own mechanism for talking to Delhi, and packing a room with a collection of lobbyists for Ladakh Union Territory status, Kashmiri Pandits, and civil society advocates of various stripes only ensured that "the one group worth talking to, the separatists, would stay away for fear of being marginalized."

Fear was palpably on the minds of our interlocutors who allowed that reports that Hizbul Mujahadeen had threatened Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, instructing him to support the pro-Pakistan hardline SAS Geelani separatist faction and break off dialogue with Delhi, played a significant role. Although the separatists denied having received such threats, and Hizbul disavowed them as well, the Mirwaiz -- who lost his father and uncle to terrorist violence and benefits from state-supplied security -- is known to be (understandably) skittish toward Hizbul, and his American wife is undoubtedly an avenue along which he can be intimidated. (NOTE: Muzamil Jaleel told us that Hizbul stood down after Mirwaiz's father-in-law "used his ISI connections" (NFI) to rein in the group. End Note.)

... And Spin-Off Working Groups Derided by All

¶25. (C) The PMO's recent announcement of working groups to investigate five sets of issues and propose solutions drew barbs from many of our contacts; the most common criticism voiced was that, not only were none of the chairmen Kashmiri, "Have any of them even visited the state?" Maulvi Iftikhar Ansari threw his hands up in disgust when the issue arose, arguing that "even bloody Karan Singh" would be a better choice than the line-up of non-Kashmiris. Izhar Wani reiterated that the roundtable itself, and the working groups it spawned, would be meaningless unless the separatists were actively engaged.

¶26. (C) Arun Joshi suggested that the working group leaders

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were selected precisely because the PMO wanted to control the process from start to finish: "If they were not Delhi-wallahs, someone might propose something the center does not like, and once proposed it would be hard to retract.

This way, their decisions are preordained." He also labeled Jammu-born J&K Chief Minister Azad as a "Delhi-wallah whose fortune is not tied to this state."

¶27. (U) The working group chairmen are:

-- Former Supreme Court Chief Justice AM Ahmadi will head up the group on J&K's special status within the Indian union, democracy, secularism, and rule of law.

-- Former RBI Governor C Rangarajan will chair the group on economic development and employment.

-- Former Foreign Secretary MK Rasgotra,s group will address simplifying cross-LoC travel of people and trade.

-- Former Chairman of the National Minorities Commission Hamid Ansari will chair the group on assisting victims of terrorism, including widows and orphans.

-- Former Cabinet Secretary and former Ambassador to the US Naresh Chandra Saxena will head up the working group on good governance. Saxena's brother, Girish Chandra Saxena, is a former governor of J&K.

Sex Scandal Roils Local Politics

¶28. (SBU) Indian media have for weeks been reporting on a sex scandal in J&K that dates back months if not years. Some details continue to be murky, as one would expect from a J&K scandal, but the elements that the media and our contacts underlined include:

-- young women and girls, including reportedly some who were under-age, had extra-marital sex with senior police, civil servants, politicians and ex-terrorists

-- this set of incidents began during the administration of former Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, but continued into the current Ghulam Nabi Azad administration

-- sources conflict as to whether the individuals were willing prostitutes, if they were trying to exchange sex for employment, if they were coerced, or even if they had been drugged beforehand; in several cases, the allegation is that sex was traded for favors such as releasing a husband from jail, at the insistence of the politicians and officers

¶29. (C) Here, many of our contacts expressed satisfaction that the CBI was called in to investigate. Yousuf Tarigami gave CBI credit for its initial investigations, which so far has netted former state ministers Ghulam Ahmad Mir and Raman Matto, as well as Principal Secretary Iqbal Khandey, whom many interlocutors said was on track to become the Chief Secretary of J&K, the highest civil service posting. Also

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among the dozen-plus arrested were a former senior BSF officer and several J&K police officers. Tarigami added that he understood the CBI was instructed to go slow with further investigations, lest too many ruling coalition politicians be swept up. To compound the conspiracy theories, Izhar Wani predicted that the NC would eventually be drawn into the

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scandal, while Maulvi Iftikhar Ansari suggested that the scandal and investigation were being manipulated by Delhi, "to sideline pro-India politicians so the separatists could be brought into the J&K government."

¶30. (SBU) The scandal has created a firestorm of protest from student groups, the mainstream political opposition, the separatist camp, and most notably, Islamic extremists. The far-right women's group Dukhtaraan-e-Millat, supported by all the above-mentioned groups, has used the scandal to campaign against "immorality" in the form of beauty parlors, cable television, Internet cafes, and restaurants (movie theaters in Srinagar having been already sidelined long ago).

Tarigami's Grand Unified Theory

¶31. (C) Over dinner, Tarigami laid out his theory of intricate connections among most of the above issues. He

argued that all the sensational attacks -- the string of tourist buses being grenaded, the Doda atrocity and the mutilation of the Nepali and Bihari laborers -- were all the work not of LeT but of Hizbul Mujahedeen. The Kashmiri extremist women's group Dukhtaraan-e-Millat was positioned to benefit from the sex scandal by seizing on the opportunity to lobby in favor of imposing purdah and pushing the Islamist revivalist agenda forward -- and was, therefore, probably behind the scandal itself, Tarigami expanded. "It's all connected," he averred. (COMMENT: We are not as convinced that the grenade attacks and more brutal atrocities are directly related. We do not rule out such a connection, but the wide disparity of the modus operandii -- outsourced and unsophisticated attacks on tourists vs. cold-blooded, premeditated, and far more "personal" attacks on villagers and migrant laborers -- suggests the groups of attacks are executed by different wings of a group, if not different groups altogether. End Comment.)

Political Micro-Drama: Creating New Districts

¶32. (C) J&K Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad on July 6 announced the creation of four new administrative districts each in Jammu and Kashmir. Our journalist and politician interlocutors considered the move a step toward increasing local government accountability, but it was not deemed to be of any significant magnitude. The move also creates additional patronage positions so job creation may have been an additional motivation. The division of districts was also grounded in recommendations listed in the 30-year-old Wazir Commission Report.

Fragmentation of the Jamaat

¶33. (C) Our journalist contacts drew our attention to a growing rift within SAS Geelani's Jamaat-e-Islami party; fully half the party want to pursue a less hardline separatist path than Geelani, they told us. The JI is to hold internal elections in the coming months, and a Geelani loss could wound pro-Pakistan sentiment and push him away from center stage.

Kashmiri Pandits: Threatened by Terror, Ignored by Delhi

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¶34. (C) Leading Kashmiri Pandit advocate Ajay Chirangoo told us in Jammu he has "absolutely no faith in (Chief Minister) Azad." He lamented that Hindus continue to be targeted by terrorists, drawing our attention to the Doda massacre and the mutilations of the Nepali and Bihari migrant workers. Although the displaced persons camps the Pandits now occupy more resemble typical Indian villages than the tent cities that preceded them, and they do receive stipends from the state, they remain largely ignored and marginalized by both Srinagar and Delhi. As an added indignity, their homesites are labeled as "migrant camps," despite their decade-plus existence in the same locations.

Indo-Pak Sins of Commission and Omission

¶35. (C) Tied as it is to Kashmir, the Indo-Pak dynamic also came under attack from many of our contacts. Islamabad was tarred as the sinner of commission for its "relentless and unstinting" (according to Ajay Chirangoo) support of anti-Hindu terrorism. Arun Joshi, Firdous Syed, and Parvez Imroze were among those who saw Delhi as playing an unending "waiting game" -- sinning by omission -- for trickling out only the barest of concessions and only when absolutely necessary, trying to marginalize the separatist camp and even ignoring the desire of the mainstream parties for Indo-Pak rapprochement, so that, according to Syed, there will be no

more separatists, only terrorists.

Physical Separation Breeds Alienation from "Mainland"

¶36. (C) Both Srinagar and Jammu boast extensive and growing air links to other Indian cities, but the dearth of rail and road connections (which suffer from snow blockages in the winter) leave the state largely isolated from the rest of India. Relief experts working in the wake of the October earthquake understood that often the best way to reach some villages in J&K was to operate from Pakistani Kashmir, and vice versa. The rocky, mountainous terrain reinforces hard segmentation; landslides, mudslides, snowmelt-fed rivers overflowing their banks, all greatly complicate travel within the state. This physical separation breeds a curious alienation from the rest of India, whereby many Kashmiri interlocutors refer to India in the third person. For example, a Kashmiri guide on a mountain may point in various directions and say "There is Pakistan, there is India, and here is Kashmir"; alternatively, some of our interlocutors, including J&K Police IG Sahai referred to visitors to the state who come from "mainland India" or "the mainland," illustrating the island-like feeling of separation that exists there.

Feeling that Delhi Doesn't Care

¶37. (C) Mustafa Kamal blamed the lull in the Indo-Pak and Delhi-Srinagar dialogues on the GOI -- the status quo partner in both these relationships -- accusing it of "killing time" to wear down the other side. IG/P Sahai in his way confirmed this when he told us that the best weapon the government held was patience; the state had more time on its hands than did the terrorists. This approach could also be interpreted as the state being willing to accept high numbers of casualties, which we have seen in the Diwali and Varanasi attacks, for example.

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Comment: A Pox on All Houses

¶38. (C) Former PDP Tourism Minister Ghulam Hassan Mir summarized the mood of our interlocutors, "A pox on both their houses" (referring to India and Pakistan), but the sentiment carried far more widely than that: "A pox on all their houses" would be a more appropriate encapsulation. Kashmiris -- including Jammuites -- are fed up with being targeted by terrorists and abused by the security forces sent to protect them, and disillusioned from decades of being treated as pawns by both Delhi and Islamabad. This disillusionment not only becomes a generational issue, infecting today's Kashmiri youth, it also fosters a culture of residents believing RUMINT as fact as long as the RUMINT supports their political stripe. Progress will require reversing nearly all these indicators:

-- Srinagar and Delhi will have to find ways to build mutual trust

-- the GOI and the separatists will need to start treating each other totally above-board

-- the terrorists need to be tracked and eliminated in without the police, Army, and paramilitaries venting their frustration on civilians

-- some modus vivendi must be crafted among separatists, mainstream politicians, Islamic hardliners, and displaced Pandits, which addresses all their concerns

-- cross-LoC infiltration must stop

139. (C) Until significant movement on all these factors is noticed by the populace, the high degree of alienation will continue, with Kashmiris continuing to think of themselves as island-dwellers between India and Pakistan, balancing themselves precariously between the two regional powers.

J&K Interlocutors

140. (C) This July 5-8 trip to J&K was Poloff's third to the region; PolFSN has been visiting the area for most of the past 20 years, including a prolonged stay during the 1995 hostage crisis. During this visit, we met with the following interlocutors:

-- Firdous Syed (aka Babar Badr), Kashmir Foundation for Peace and Development Studies, former Muslim Janbaaz Force terrorist (Srinagar)

-- Parvez Imroze, President, J&K Coalition of Civil Society, and President, Association of Parents of the Disappeared (Srinagar)

-- Khurram Parvez, Program Coordinator, J&K Coalition of Civil Society and winner of the 2006 Reebok Human Rights Award (Srinagar)

-- Dr. Ajay Chirangoo, President, Panun Kashmir (NGO supporting Kashmiri Hindus or Pandits) (Jammu)

-- Balraj Puri, Director, Institute for J&K Affairs (Jammu)

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-- Dr. Mustafa Kamal, Member Legislative Assembly (MLA), National Conference (Srinagar)

-- Ghulam Hassan Mir, MLA, Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP)/Mir (Srinagar)

-- Shia cleric Maulvi Iftikhar Ansari, former MLA, PDP (Srinagar)

-- Yousuf Tarigami, MLA and General Secretary, Communist Party of India/Marxist (CPI/M) (Srinagar)

-- Gopal Sharma, Director General J&K Police (Srinagar)

-- Kuldip Khoda, Additional Director General J&K Police (Criminal Investigations Division) (Srinagar)

-- SM Sahai, Inspector General (IG)/Kashmir, J&K Police (Srinagar)

-- Dr. SP Vaid, Inspector General (IG)/Jammu, J&K Police (Jammu)

-- ML Mehra, Additional Superintendent of Police (Katra), J&K Police (Jammu)

-- Shakeel Ahmad Beig, Senior Superintendent of Police, Control Room Operations, J&K Police (Jammu)

-- Izhar Wani, Correspondent, AFP (Srinagar)

-- Ahmad Ali Fayyaz, Bureau Chief, "Daily Excelsior" (Srinagar)

-- Shujaat Bukhari, Correspondent, "The Hindu" (Srinagar)

-- Muzamil Jaleel, Bureau Chief, "Indian Express" (Srinagar)

-- Ved Bhasin, Chairman, "Kashmir Times" (Jammu)

-- Luv Puri, Correspondent, "The Hindu," also son of Balraj Puri (Jammu)

-- Arun Joshi, Correspondent, "Hindustan Times" (Jammu)

¶41. (U) Visit New Delhi's Classified Website:
(<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/sa/newdelhi/>)
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